The Chosen People

Douglas S. Winnail

Millennia ago, God made promises to His "chosen people" which are affecting world events even today. Yet many do not know who His chosen people are—or the amazing future He has planned for all whom He will choose.

Who are they? Why were they chosen? What does their future hold?

What do you *really know* about the chosen people? How does this concept relate to *your* life? Did certain cultures simply imagine or invent this idea to enhance their own self-esteem, or justify their grandiose desires? Are the Jews the sole claimants to this title? Could you be part of a people God has chosen?

Over the years, much has been written about the chosen people—but much has been *forgotten*! Kings, queens, politicians and presidents once believed deeply in this concept, and guided their nations accordingly. Yet few today realize how this idea has driven the course of history, and affected the lives of millions of people around the globe—because they have never been told! Schools, churches and governments that once recognized the existence of a "chosen people" now ignore the idea altogether. Modern academics and theologians dismiss the subject as the wishful thinking of fanatics, and assume or assert it has been thoroughly discredited—*without ever studying the subject!*

Some recent books have claimed that the idea of a chosen people is not only fanciful fiction based on false assumptions, but that is a dangerous, deceptive and divisive notion that fosters prejudice, a false sense of superiority, and is a serious threat to world peace! However, this much maligned and misunderstood subject sheds remarkable light on the story of mankind. The concept of a "chosen people" explains why certain nations have flourished and why others have not. As one journalist wrote, "the religious dimension has in the past answered questions about national identity and purpose that still have not been adequately been answered in any other way" (*Chosen People*, Longley, p. 10). This concept is a key to understanding Bible prophecies that reveal how major events that lie just ahead will impact the lives of nearly everyone now living on the earth. This is a subject we cannot afford to ignore!

A Biblical Idea

One reason the idea of a "chosen people" is so misunderstood is that it comes directly from the Bible. Numerous studies indicate that most people today—even in so-called "Christian" nations—*know little* about the actual content of the Scriptures. When many hear the phrase "the chosen people" they think only of the Jews, yet this is a serious misconception that ignores what the Bible actually says, and obscures a much bigger picture.

God's first "chosen people" were the Israelites. In the book of Exodus, God told Moses to "say to the *children of Israel*: I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians… I will take you as *My people*, and I will be your God" (Exodus 6:6–7). Later, the Israelites were told that "if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a *special treasure* to Me above all people… you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a *holy nation*" (Exodus 19:5–6). Just before entering the Promised Land, Moses told the children of Israel that "you are a holy [set apart] people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has *chosen you* to be a people for Himself" and "the Lord has proclaimed you to be His *special people*… He will set you high above all the nations" (Deuteronomy 7:6–7; 14:2; 26:18–19).

God chose the *children of Israel* as His special people, and said that He would elevate them above all the peoples of the earth. However, many forget that the nation of Israel was composed of *12* tribes. The Jews come from *only one* of those tribes—the tribe of Judah. When God made His covenant with the children of Israel, it included *all 12 tribes*—not just the Jews! The Bible also reveals that the Israelites were *not* chosen because they were superior—but because they "were the *least* of all peoples" (Deuteronomy 6:7). They were chosen to learn to live by the laws of God, and provide a *practical example* to the world of the *benefits* that come from obeying the laws of God (Deuteronomy 4:1–10). God said they were to be "My servant… a light to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 49:3–6). They were chosen to show the world a *better way to live*—it was not that they were better!

New Testament Chosen People

The idea of a "chosen people" is also an important theme in the New Testament. Jesus *chose* 12 men to be Apostles (Luke 6:12–16), and He told them that "you did not choose Me, I have *chosen* you" (John 15:12). Jesus also said that "many are called, but few are *chosen*" (Matthew 20:16), and that He would return to gather

His "elect" [chosen] (Matthew 24:22–31). The Apostle Paul added a spiritual dimension when he wrote of the New Testament Church as "the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). Paul indicated that Gentiles, too, can become *spiritual Jews*—part of *spiritual Israel*—through repentance (Romans 2:28–29: Galatians 3:29). This precious truth, however, has led many to *assume wrongly* that the idea of a "chosen people" is *only* a spiritual concept, and that it is no longer relevant that God chose the Israelites as His special people. Yet such a wrong assumption *ignores* the biblical and historical evidence behind a concept that has driven the course of history, and that will have a dramatic impact on the future. But is it possible to *identify* the Israelite nations today? If so, *why* is this important?

Biblical Evidence

The Bible indicates that Jesus, the Messiah, would come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10; Hebrews 7:14). The Bible clearly states, however, that the *Israelites* would inherit vital physical promises made to Abraham and his descendants (Romans 9:1–5; Galatians 3:29). What were these promises? They would become a great and generous people dispensing aid and spreading benefits around the world (Genesis 12:1–3). They would multiply into many nations and be the progenitors of kings (15:4; 17:5–7). They would gain possession of the gates of their enemies (22:17–18; 24:60)—such as Gibraltar, Suez and Singapore. Their prestige would exceed other nations' (27:28–29) and they would expand around the globe as a great colonizing people (26:3–4; 28:13–14).

Ancient Israel was comprised of ten tribes whose descendants today are found primarily among the nations of northwest Europe, and among the British-descended peoples, including those of the United States, Canada and Australia. Genesis 49 contains a remarkable series of prophecies about unique characteristics of the Israelite tribes that would be seen in "the latter days." These prophecies point to nations in northwest Europe. For more about these "lost" ten tribes, see *Prophecy Comes Alive,* "Where Are the 'Lost' Tribes of Israel?" on page 18 of this issue.

However, Scripture explains that the *physical* blessings of the birthright promises would be focused on the descendants of Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Manasseh would become a great nation, and Ephraim would become a company [multitude or commonwealth] of nations (Genesis 35:10–12; 48:19). These very specific promises have found fulfillment in the United States of America and the nations of the British-descended peoples (Britain, Canada, Australia, New

Zealand and South Africa). America has become the most powerful nation the world has ever seen, and the British assembled an empire and a commonwealth that girdled the globe. No other nations on earth have fulfilled these ancient promises—and done so at the *very time* prophesied in the Scriptures, 2,520 years after Israel was sent into Babylonian captivity. For more detail on this topic, please request your *free* copy of our informative booklet, *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*.

When the Bible was translated into English, many in England began to recognize their true identity as Israelites. However, this was not a new discovery, or a novel idea invented by Protestants, as some critics claim. Gildas, a Briton writing in the 6th century—a thousand years before the Reformation—described Britain as God's "latter-day Israel" (*The Ruin of Britain*, Winterbottom, p. 28). The biblical connection—that America and the British-descended peoples are the descendants of the brothers Ephraim and Manasseh—provides the real basis for the "special relationship" that exists between the Anglo-American peoples.

Historical Evidence

Some of the most visible and informative material connecting the peoples of northwest Europe with their Israelite roots are *place names* and ancient legends about national origins. The Bible records that the children of Israel were carried as captives into what is now northern Iraq between the Black and Caspian Seas around 720bc. Historians describe waves of migrations into Europe from the east in later centuries, which would have included the Israelite tribes. The biblical description of the tribe of Dan as "a serpent by the way" (Genesis 49:17) refers to its habit of leaving its name on lands it occupied (Joshua 19:47). Place names like the Dardanelles, Danube, Dniester, Danzig and Denmark provide evidence of Dan's migrations across Europe. While some critics suggest that this is merely playing games with words, such criticism ignores the historical significance of ancient place names. The Danube and Dniester river basins were major migration routes into central Europe from the Black Sea. Danzig (Gdansk) was a major port on the Baltic at the mouth of the Vistula River, and Denmark was a springboard for peoples that came to the British Isles. This trail is not hard to follow.

Another connection between the Israelites and the British Isles involves some of the earliest peoples to settle in Ireland—the *Tuatha de Danaan.* Modern historians describe these settlers as mythological people of the goddess Danu, and gloss over the obvious biblical connection to the *tribe of Dan*. Modern scholars dismiss as

groundless fables the ancient legends that these Danite peoples came from Egypt, around the time of Moses, by way of Greece and Spain (see *The Story of the Irish Race,* MacManus, chap. 3). Yet Josephus, a Jewish historian in Roman times, quotes from letters between the Greek Spartans and Jews in Jerusalem acknowledging they were kindred peoples (*Antiquity of the Jews,* XIII:V:8). The ancient legends also mention that Danite ships brought a Jewish princess and a stone to Ireland, over which Irish kings were crowned—a custom also practiced by the ancient Israelites (2 Kings 11:12–14). The legends say that this stone was eventually brought to Scone in Scotland, where Scottish kings were crowned over it for hundreds of years. In the 1300s, Edward I carried the stone off to London, where British monarchs have been crowned over it—continuing this ancient Israelite practice for centuries before the stone was returned to Scotland in 1996.

Additional evidence about the national origins of peoples in the British Isles points in the same direction. In the Scottish Declaration of Independence, issued at Arbroath in 1320ad, the Scots describe their origins: "We know and from the chronicles and books of the ancients we find… the Scots… journeyed from *Greater Scythia* by of the Tyrrhenian [Mediterranean] Sea and the Pillars of Hercules, and dwelt for a long course of time in Spain… Thence they came, twelve hundred years after the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, to their home in the west where they live today." This was no trivial document. It was created by educated leaders of Scotland, and delivered to the Pope in Rome as part of an appeal to counter attempts by Edward I to subjugate Scotland. While Edward employed lawyers in England and on the Continent to support his right to take over Scotland, the Pope eventually decided in favor of the Scots. This passage from the Declaration of Arbroath is hardly ever cited today, because historians prefer to view it as a fable fabricated by the Scots (see *A History of Britain,* Sharma, p. 218). But the British historian Bede, writing 500 years earlier, also mentions that the early peoples of Scotland came from Scythia (*The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation,* p. 5). Scythia was the area, between the Black and Caspian Seas, where the children of Israel went into captivity.

Numerous sources also indicate that the Britons and the Saxon peoples who settled in England originally came from Scythia. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, dating from the time of Alfred the Great (880ad), records that the Britons came from ancient Armenia (the area between the Black and Caspian Seas—also referred to as Scythia). Around 800ad, the Welsh historian Nennius documented that the Saxons came from Scythia. The Greek writer Herodotus calls the Scythians "the Sacae" (*The Histories,* 4:76) which comes from the Hebrew name

Isaac (the son of Abraham)—a designation that the Bible states would be applied to God's people (Genesis 48:16). The Behistan Rock, engraved in three languages at the time of Darius, King of Persia (contemporary of the prophet Daniel), refers to the Scythians as Cimmerians (or Gimiri). The Celtic Welsh still preserve this name today—referring to themselves as the Cymry or Cymru. The link between the ancient Israelites—God's chosen people—and the inhabitants of the British Isles, is certainly not farfetched or fiction. The connections are definitely there!

Crucial Errors

Considering the Bible's emphasis on God's chosen people, the clear description of their role—and the mention of specific qualities the 12 tribes would possess in the last days—*why* is this subject dismissed by most theologians and historians? The main reason is that it comes directly from the Bible, and the Bible is no longer considered a source of truth! Rationalism, evolutionary science and secular worldviews have generated doubts about the existence of God and the credibility of the Bible. Liberal intellectuals who dominate the fields of education, literature, theology and the media do not take biblical subjects seriously. Theologians no longer take the Bible literally. Agnostic academics, and skeptics in the media, are often hostile to religious topics. If the Bible is not meant to be taken literally, there is no need for concern about who God may have chosen as His people. If there is no God, there is obviously no people He has chosen!

Historian Edwin Jones (a Welsh Catholic) is among those who challenge the idea of the English being an elect nation. He considers the idea of America and the English-speaking peoples being the modern-day Israelites a narrow Anglocentric Protestant worldview, based on false and misguided assumptions. He claims that this idea is a "great myth" that has imprisoned the English and isolated them from their European neighbors, having fostered a sense of superiority, a *false identity* and xenophobia among the English. In Jones' view, "many Americans have been afflicted by the old 'English disease'—thinking of themselves as 'chosen', different and superior people" (*The English Nation: The Great Myth,* p. 362). Ignoring the role of God in history, Jones attributes the rise of England and America to great power status solely to the influence of history and geography. He indicates that the idea of an *elect nation* is "now dead" among scholars (p. 292) and is termed "bigotry" by ecumenical theologians. He seems committed to expunge from the minds of the English the idea that they are the inheritors of God's promises. Professor Jones then proceeds to offer a "new" myth—that England's real future lies with the European Union—in contrast to what Bible prophecy reveals!

Journalist Clifford Longley recognizes the anti-biblical and anti-supernatural bias of modern scholars who tend to relegate the subject of modern-day Israel to the realm of extremists and fanatics—yet he falls into the same trap. After expressing his own doubts about God and the Bible, he then concludes, regarding the idea of God's "chosen people," that "while it is still influential, *it is simply not true—and never was*" (Longley, p. 281). Longley *suspects* there are no chosen people because he *assumes*—contrary to what the Scriptures reveal—that "God (if we agree there is a God) does not operate that way" (*ibid.0* p. 277). He argues that the idea of a "chosen people" allowed certain nations (British, Americans, Dutch, etc.) to believe they had a right to pursue their interests at the expense of others and that "if the Chosen People theory were true, then God could be relied to punish such a nation that abused its privileged status… [however] in the real world *no such divine corrective operates*" (p. 281). That is a dangerous assumption!

A Surprising Future!

In spite of the doubts and theories of modern scholars, there is a *real God* who has made known what lies ahead for His people, and the nations of the world (for more on this subject, please request our free booklet *The Real God*). Long ago, God warned that *Israelite traits*—being independent-minded, stubborn and rebellious, having a proclivity to forget their covenant with God and pursue corrupt, pagan practices (Deuteronomy 9:6–13)—would lead modern-day Israel into major difficulties "in the latter days" (Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:27–29). Misguided leaders would be influential in leading Israelite peoples astray. Ezekiel describes a "conspiracy" among leaders who violate [corrupt] the laws of God and "hide their eyes" from biblical truths, who fabricate visions of the future and dispense lies to gain or retain power and influence—and that these false ideas would be believed (Ezekiel 22:25–29; also Jeremiah 5:31). The words of misguided leaders, coupled with the Israelite tendency to "do their own thing" (Judges 21:25; Jeremiah 7:24; 11:8) and rationalize their decisions (Jeremiah 23:17), would lead to widespread disbelief, disobedience and eventually a state of *national blindness* regarding the plan of God and their blessings as His people (Isaiah 1:2–3; 29:9–14; Jeremiah 5:20–21; Romans 11:8–10, 20–32)—the exact condition we see today!

Jeremiah explains that because latter-day Israelites reject the laws of God, wallow in sexual indulgence and scoff at the notion of divine correction, God will use foreign nations to chastise them (Jeremiah 5). This period of tribulation is referred to as "the time of Jacob's [Israel's] trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). God's instruments of correction will be ten nations in the heart of Europe led by Germany (Isaiah

10:5–11; Revelation 17:12)—who will in turn, be chastened for their pride (Isaiah 10:12). The sudden and catastrophic demise of modern-day Israel (Isaiah 29:4–7; Jeremiah 6:26; 15:1–8; Hosea 5:5) and the subsequent demise of resurgent Gentile powers in Europe will be a sobering witness to the world that there is a real God who intervenes in history, and that His purposes will stand (Deuteronomy 29:24–29).

The biblical concept of God's chosen people is not a trivial issue. It explains why certain nations have been the recipients of so many physical blessings. The Scriptures reveal God's *purpose* for selecting the nation of Israel, and provide clues to its current identity and location. Bible prophecies indicate that the modern Israelite nations will bear the brunt of the coming tribulation because of their national sins. However, no matter what ***anyone's*** national heritage, *all* who repent—change their lifestyle—and begin to live according to the laws of God, can become part of God's chosen people (1 Peter 2:9), and reign with Christ in the coming Kingdom of God.

Original Link:
https://www.tomorrowsworld.org/magazines/2004/january-february/the-chosen-people